Mission of St. Angela Merici

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A Tribute to Saint Angela

By an Ursuline

1807–1907

MAY TWENTY-FOURTH

FIRST CENTENARY

OF

BLESSED ANGELA MERICI'S CANONIZATION

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THOMAS C. O'REILLY, D. D.,
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Bishop of Cleveland.

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THIS LITTLE SOUVENIR OF THE GLORIOUS EVENT OF THE CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY OF

SAINT ANGELA MERICI'S

CANONIZATION IS LOVINGLY DEDICATED BY HER DAUGHTERS, THE URSULINES OF CLEVELAND, TO ALL THE DEAR CHILDREN WHO HAVE BEEN, WHO ARE, AND WHO WILL BE OBJECTS OF THEIR CARE AND SOLICITUDE.

1807-1907

Feast of Our Lady's Annunciation,
March 25, 1907,
Villa Angela, Nottingham, O.

St. Angela Receiving Banner from St. Ursula

Foreword

THE first Centenary Anniversary of the canonization of the Foundress of the Ursulines, is an occasion which calls for an expression of our gratitude to the Giver of all good gifts for the wondrous and manifold favors conferred, first on the sainted Foundress, Angela Merici; secondly, on the noble order for the instruction of youth which it was her especial grace to call into existence.

This We heartily do and We pray that love for Jesus Christ and zeal for the Christian education of children, the lambs of His fold, may ever continue to be the characteristic marks of her daughters, the Ursulines.

To this souvenir I would say, God speed thee little book, on thy mission of love.

✠ IGNATIUS F. HORSTMANN,

Bishop of Cleveland.

May 6, 1907.

RT. REV. IGNATIUS F. HORSTMANN, D. D.

RT. REV. MONSIGNOR BOFF, V. G.

Venerated Friend and Spiritual Director, Villa Angela, Nottingham, Ohio

MISSION OF
SAINT ANGELA MERICI

WHILE celebrating the first centennial anniversary of Blessed Angela Merici's Canonization, we were naturally led to reflect upon her beautifully marvelous life-career. The supreme lessons of her life impressed us forcibly and seemed to urge us to recall them in this little Commemoration as being especially apposite in the light of our present day needs. St. Angela loved her Creator immeasurably and so sought to serve Him in the way He seems to like best—by caring for human souls, especially the souls of children, by esteeming, valuing them above all earthly riches, on whose normal development she spent all the rich years and sanctified energies of her whole life.

WHENCE THIS BOOKLET TOOK ITS RISE.

Angela was born at Desenzano, situated on the western banks of Lake Garda, Italy, on March 21, 1474. It is claimed that the Mericis were of noble

rank, rendered still more illustrious by marriage connections with many distinguished families. In Angela's time, though they had lost much in wealth and high social position, the Mericis of Desenzano were well-to-do and highly respected; but what is more worthy of record is that the sweet odor of virtue, begotten of the study and practice of holy religion, permeated the Merician home.

SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS STANDING OF THE MERICIS.

"The very best instruction of youth, for the security of faith and true religion and the purity of morals, is necessarily that which has its beginning from the tenderest years in the society of home."—Leo XIII.

Both parents of Angela were zealous, practical Christians, and taught their children to serve the Creator in the days of their youth; both were ardent admirers of the heroic men and women who in all ages had been devoted followers of Christ and His Blessed Mother—the Saints, God's especial Friends. Every day a portion of the Sacred Scriptures, religious works, or the record of some ennobling life was read in the Merician household. These last, stories of sanctified life-careers, fascinated the listening children, impelling them to

STIMULANTS TO VIRTUE FOUND IN MERICIAN HOME.

imitate the perfection which they found in every deed, but in Angela's heart especially the glow of admiration deepened more and more into intensified love for God and His holy law.

It was her mother who first taught her to lisp the Names of Jesus and Mary, taught her the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Creed, the Blessed acts of Faith, Hope, and Charity, etc. These lessons sank deep into her young heart, and He who dwells within our being moved sweetly and irresistibly the springs of love within that angel soul; so that converse with God in prayer was to her no wearying task, but an ever increasing charm and delight, a source of light and invincible strength. Angela early evinced a preference for the "good things" of heaven to those of earth. The "sweets" of prayer increased her soul's vigor, and like the "sweets" of earth engendered a desire for more, but oh, how different were the effects. Eager love for social pleasure and the good things of life, takes away relish for prayer and devotion to religious exercises, lessons esteem for spiritual truths; but St. Angela, loving the sweets of heavenly converse with God, prized purity of soul, the

HEAVENLY VS. EARTHLY "SWEETS."

friendship of the Creator above all earthly gifts; looked upon sin, the slightest sin, as the only real evil in the world. This may seem to strenuous pleasure seekers, up-to-date intellectualists, mere squeamishness, superstition, in very truth folly, imbecility. There is a vast combination of powers propping up this estimate, chief among them godless science, social ways, prayerless homes, unsanctified hearts in those who ought to teach the young, by word and example, the obligations of life.

WHAT ANGELA LEARNED FROM THE GOSPEL STORY.

When Angela learned from the Gospel story, the mystery of our Lord crucified for our redemption, she multiplied her efforts to bring into her own daily life, and into the lives of all with whom she came in contact, the life and teachings of Him Who died that we might live.

While still young, our saint passed through the crucible of affliction, God's usual mode of taking away the dross from chosen human characters. Hers was thus purified, prepared for the great work He had ordained her to do. She was early apprized in vision that she would some day found a society of virgins in Brescia. Doubtless intimation of the educational nature of the work was

given her, if we judge from her subsequent far-reaching, zealous labors in the instructions of the young all over the Brescian province; however, her youth and prime passed by, and with them the wars and troublous times for which Northern Italy and in fact all Europe of that period is noted, before the divine promise materialized. The strife and social unrest which prevented the execution of the heaven-designed project, certainly increased its need. Five years prior to her happy death on Nov. 25, 1535, after forty years of delay and discouragement, Angela, commanded by Jesus Christ Himself, founded her blessed Institute, the object of which is, first and foremost, the personal sanctification of its members, and secondly, the education and training of youth in the only possible way that will make their present and future lives successful in the truest and best sense of the word.

THE OBJECT OF THE URSULINE INSTITUTE.

Those are millionaires many times over, in possession of the wealth that fails not, who are early taught to keep their consciences unsullied, to heed the divine command "Serve thy Creator in the days of thy youth." This is best done

RICHES WHICH NEVER TAKE WINGS.

by striving to mould the character after a perfect model—this Model is Our Lord Jesus Christ as Child, Youth and Man. The young heart in its purity and simplicity, in candor and readiness to learn, is as virgin soil rich and fertile, wherein the seeds of truth grow with tropical luxuriance, when refreshed with the copious showers of God's divine grace and an ever increasing knowledge of Jesus Christ, of the great fact of the Redemption, of the divine gifts purchased by the Redemption, and left us in the Church—the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the sacraments which encompass and spiritualize human life from its beginning to the last moment of its earthly existence; of the personal responsibility that each one rests under of living according to the Gospel teachings. Hence, a perfect system of education will provide for growth in holiness, purity, integrity, growth in those powers and qualifications which will adorn the soul forever, a supernatural growth, as well as a physical and intellectual growth. This is education, this alone reaches the latent powers of the spiritual being within us. The child is not destined for a mere natural life, hemmed in by

THE CHILD HEART IS A RICH SOIL IN WHICH TO PLANT THE SEEDS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Our Lord Blessing Little Children

time and space and physical weakness; but is required while here on earth, to fit itself to enter upon its eternal inheritance. The obligations of life are not based on opinions, nor are they fictions, but great realities. Each little one is a child of God by Holy Baptism, and must be taught by word and example, how to become a follower of Him Who is always and ever the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

THE MARVELLOUS IN ST. ANGELA'S LIFE.

We pass over in St. Angela's life, the gift of tongues, prophecy, miracles, visions, and many extraordinary manifestations of heaven's favor; nor do we dwell on her wonderful knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, the Fathers, and the Latin tongue which caused many professors, doctors of divinity, celebrated preachers to seek her in the interpretation of difficult Scriptural passages. The marvelous is found more or less in the lives of all those whom the Church crowns with glory and places on her altars—the Saints. Angela Merici was a Saint.

The term "Saint" is not one of the catchy words of the day. It is associated with much that is considered disagreeable, distasteful to our feelings.

It doesn't accord with our literary and aesthetic view of things. The term has nothing of the ring in it, for many ears, of hero, heroine or hustler. Saints are often regarded as objects of the world's pity, as lacking all the qualities that go to make life a success, yet if we examine closely, by reading a few lives of saints, we shall find that they were in a marked degree, the personification of our up-to-date aphorisms: Fortune favors the brave. The race is for the swiftest. He who seeks, wins. In truth, every saint is a glorious personification of the much lauded terms, success, energy, perseverance, foresight, prudence, penetration. The Saints exercised all the powers of mind and body in the cause of truth and eternal Justice, in benefiting human society, in procuring for themselves riches and securities on which they could rely in their day of need. They present the grandest examples of philanthropy, or rather, sweet charity, exercised for the benefit of their fellow-men, for the sake of Our Lord Jesus Christ; and "no matter in what sphere they moved or whether they were men or women, no matter what their avocations, their personal gifts or endowments, the virtues and qualities

which go toward making up true, perfect, heroic —supernaturally heroic—manhood and womanhood are substantially the same in all." What these qualities and virtues are Cardinal Newman sets forth in the following admirable portraiture of the Saint character: "Very various are the saints, their very variety is a token of God's workmanship; but however various and whatever their special line of duty, they have been heroes in it; they have attained such noble self-command, they are so meek, so gentle, so tender-hearted, so merciful, so sweet, so cheerful, so full of prayer, so diligent, so forgetful of injuries, they have sustained such great and continued pains, they have persevered in such vast labors, they have made such valiant confessions of the truths left by Our Lord Jesus Christ, they have wrought such abundant miracles, they have been blessed with such strange successes, that they have set up a standard before us of truth, of magnanimity, of holiness, of love. They are not always our examples, we are not always bound to follow them; not more than we are bound to obey literally some of Our Lord's precepts, such as turning the cheek, or giving away

A SAINT CHARACTER ANALYZED.

the coat; but though not always our examples, they are always our standard of right and good; they are raised up to be monuments and lessons, they remind us of God, they introduce us into the unseen world, they teach us what Christ loves, they track out for us the way that leads heavenward. They are to us who see them, what wealth, notoriety, rank, and name are to the multitude of men who live in darkness—objects of our veneration and our homage."

How to Prevent Our Lives from being Failures.

As a parting word to the dear ones to whom this little commemorative work is dedicated, we would say, that tho we cannot hope to bring the glorious virtues of the saints into our daily lives in the wondrous manner which characterized theirs, yet we must not forget Our Lord's injunction resting upon each one of us, "Be ye perfect even as your Heavenly Father is perfect." The import of these words ought to startle us out of our listlessness, cause us to put forth every effort to make our thoughts, words, actions pleasing to the Author and Master of human life, the God of goodness, justice and truth. The highest intellectual endowments or artistic accomplishments apart from God are

fleeting as beauty or health, or life, not to be relied upon in our day of reckoning.

There is but one Being Who can read our thoughts and view our secret actions, Who knows to whom our hearts' service is given. He it is Who will reward each according to his deserts. Let us recall here the commands to pray and to pray always and the consoling heart-helping assurance attached, "Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." The "pray always" is feasible even to the busiest when in the morning they consecrate all the work of the day to God's sacred service.

Signora Merici Teaching Her Daughter Angela to Pray

"Mother! it is a charmed word, endowed with magic power
To soothe the sad and troubled soul in many a gloomy hour;
It sweeps the spirit's chords like songs of angels heard in dreams;
It opes the fountains of the heart, as spring unlocks the streams."

Our frontispiece represents St. Angela kneeling before the martyr-Princess, Ursula, receiving from her a most significant gift, a standard. St. Ursula, valiant witness in her death to Christian faith and virtue, had been since her glorious martyrdom in 382, an ideal type of Christian maidenhood and later the patroness of teachers and students.

A Thousand Years are as a Single Day.

The scene related in Angeline biography and attested by contemporary artists, commemorates the miraculous vision in which St. Ursula urges Angela to hasten the organization of her society and promises to help her by special prayers and protection.

What centuries of time are bridged over in this glorious meeting between these valiant and noble women. One glorified, steeped in the joys of her Celestial Home, for well nigh twelve centuries emerging from the midst of this hidden bliss to encourage the sanctified enterprise entrusted by Our Lord to St. Angela Merici a woman whose life was devoted to His service.

PRAYER TO ST. ANGELA.

St. Angela, holy Mother and Foundress, bless your daughters, the Ursulines, in their efforts to acquire sanctity, so that their lives may be modelled on that of Jesus Christ Our Lord, that they may have something of thy passionate love for the Crucified and for His Cross; pray, dear Mother, that they may fulfill the blessed work inaugurated by you at Our Lord's command, the Christian education of youth; pray, too, for the youth of our time, around whom is spread a material glamour woven out of the witcheries of science and the glories of earth, which serves to make them forget the obligations they are under of living Christian lives, combating error, avoiding the defilements of sin, cultivating Christ-like virtues, of preparing for the great and all-important realties which are to come—death, judgment, eternity. Dear St. Angela, watch over thy daughters, watch over and guide their precious charges. Amen.

Hymn to St. Angela

Praise, my soul our Moth- er's vir - tues, Tell the beau - ty that a — dorns

Her blest life, so pure and saint - ly, Ra - diant with se - raph - ic charms.

For God's lit - tle ones she la - bored, Teach - ing them to know and serve Him,

Seiz - ing all life's gold - en chan - ces, Heav - en's guer - don thus to win.

Chorus —

Bless - ed An - gel! guard our chil - dren, Taint - ing e - vils, 'round them roam

Ho - ly Moth - er! we im - plore thee Help them reach their E - ter - nal Home.

Hymn to St. Angela

I

Praise, my soul, our Mother's virtues,
Tell the beauty that adorns
Her blest life, so pure and saintly,
Rad'ant with seraphic charms.
For God's little ones she labored,
Teaching them to know and serve Him,
Seizing all life's golden chances,
Heaven's guerdon thus to win.

Chorus—Blessed Angel! guard our children,
Tainting evils round them roam,
Holy Mother! we implore thee
Help them reach their eternal Home.

II

Love of Jesus was her passion,
Human souls her quest thru life,
Leading them in gentle patience
Out of darkness, into light.
Glorious was thy tomb, O Mother,
Signal favor from on High!
Causing all the land to wonder,
And the doubting soul to cry

Chorus—Holy Mother! we implore thee
Lead us thru life's dev'ous ways,
Help us when in death we languish,
That we reach blest endless days.

III

Garda's banks saw glor'ous harvest
Spreading outward more and more,
Till today behold its branches
Reaching e'en to Erie's shore.
Sing, my soul, our Mother's glories,
Growing greater year by year,
Pray her ward away all evil,
Let no sin find dwelling here.

Chorus—Holy Mother, we implore thee
Lead us thru life's dev'ous ways,
Help us when in death we languish,
That we reach blest endless days.

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